

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application is requested. Claims 1-20 will be active in the application subsequent to entry of this Amendment.

In the current Official Action the previous prior art-based rejections have been withdrawn as overcome and two new prior art documents cited – U.S. 4,840,851 to Gölander et al as the primary reference and U.S. 6,960,275 to Vesley et al as a secondary reference.

Applicants have reviewed their claims and recast them directing them to preferred aspects of the disclosure. More specifically, independent claims 1 and 7 have been amended and directed to specify that the water-soluble ethylenically unsaturated monomer contains at least half, that is 50 mol%, of either acrylic acid, an acrylic acid salt or both. This is a preferred aspect of the disclosure as discussed throughout the specification and in particular the first half of page 7. New claims 19 and 20 directed to larger contents of the acrylic acid (salt) which may be up to 80 or up to 95 mol% of the water-soluble ethylenically unsaturated monomer, respectively.

The amendments made to the claims are based upon the description of the application as filed and do not constitute added subject matter. These amendments also distinguish claims from the prior art both in terms of novelty and non-obvious.

Applicants' claims, such as claim 7 in particular, include a multiple step feature of a first polymerization to thicken the aqueous solution followed by shaping this thickened solution then a second polymerization where the aqueous solution is fully polymerized in its desired form.

The primary reference to Gölander is in "the field of surface coating of a substrate" that is applying a polymeric coating containing ethylene oxide units as the primary structural units; *see* column 1, lines 7-10.

While it is true that at column 7, lines 11-26, Gölander describes partial then final curing there is no shaping step described or suggested, that is the step of shaping a partially cross-linked gel. In any event, the materials used in Gölander are quite distinct from those specified by the claims of the present application.

Vesley is (apparently) cited for a procedure in which a viscous aqueous solution is polymerized by irradiating the aqueous solution with light, then the aqueous solution is shaped into a film. There is no disclosure in Vesley of initial irradiation, completely stopping the radiation with light, shaping the thickened aqueous solution in a shaping step and followed by

final irradiation and cure. As with Gölander et al, Vesley uses a very different polymeric solution primarily based on viscoelastic materials; *see* column 1, lines 18-20 and a more detailed discussion at column 6, lines 28-39. Vesley's viscoelastic pressure sensitive materials are prepared using a release surface to which the materials are applied then irradiated or otherwise cured.

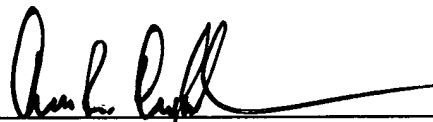
Neither of these documents, either considered separately or in combination, describes that which applicants have directed their claims, namely an acrylic acid or an acrylic acid salt which constitutes at least half, and likely more, up to 95 mol%, of the ethylenically unsaturated monomer. Nor do either of the newly cited documents describe or suggest procedures in which, like featured in claim 7, there is the first polymerization to polymerize part of the monomer and thicken the aqueous solution followed by stopping the radiation and shaping the thickened aqueous solution which is then followed by a second polymerization to polymerize the solution.

For the above reasons it is respectfully submitted that applicants' claims are directed to inventive subject matter. Reconsideration and allowance are solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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